19: Marshall M-8 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

173 114 water flowing with sand."[3] The reference to the Gobi Desert seems rather far-fetched and has, therefore, been abandoned by scholars. Dr. D. C. Gilmore suggests the Salween as being a river that fulfils the requirements of the tradition, but bases his conclusions largely on the reference to the early home of "Htaw Meh Pa" as located on Mount "Thaw Thi," the Olympus of the Karen, which is mentioned in Dr. Vinton's version of the story, from which he quotes.[4] This reference is not found in other versions of the story and was probably not a part of it in its earliest form. It seems reasonable, therefore, to look further for the sandy river. Dr. Laufer[5] asserts that the early home of the peoples of eastern Asia was in the upper reaches of the Hoang-ho or Yellow River, of China, and that from this center the Tibetans migrated westward; the early tribes of Indo-China, southward; and the Chinese, southeastward. According to this view, the progenitors of the Karen probably formed a part of the southward migration and, at some stage of their march, stopped on the banks of the Yellow River which, as its name suggests, has from time immemorial been freighted with silt and sand. Here they may have tried to cook the shellfish referred to in the tradition. From this region they doubtless made their way down to what is now Yunnan, where perhaps they found a domicile till they were pushed farther south by migrating people advancing behind them.

101 174 The name "Karen" is an imperfect transliteration of the Burmese word "Kayin," the derivation of which has puzzled students of that language. It has been thought that this word is derived from the name by which the Red Karen call themselves, *i.e.*, "Ka-Ya." The designation of the Sgaw for themselves is "Pgha K'Nyaw," which has not usually been associated with the native name of the Red Karen. In August, 1914, it was suggested to me[6] that these tribal names, which have hitherto been thought to mean simply "men," were related to, and derived from, the name of one of the four ancient tribes of China, that is, the Ch'iang (ancient pronunciation, Giang or Gyang). This tribe, which is indicated in Chinese by the ideograph of a man combined with the character designating a sheep, conveying the meaning of shepherd, occupied

---

[3] E. B. Cross, *Journal, American Oriental Soc.* (1854) Vol. IV, pp. 298, ff. and D. C. Gilmore, *Journal, Burma Research Soc.*, Vol. I, p. 191.

[4] J. H. Vinton, D.D. and Rev. T. Thah Byu, M. A., *Karen Folklore Stories.*

[5] Dr. B. Laufer, Curator of Anthropology, Field Columbian Museum, Chicago, in a note to the writer, Jan. 6, 1920.

[6] By the Rev. Thra Ba Ta, in a letter dated August 14, 1917.

19: Marshall M-6 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

101
●174
114
the western part of ancient China. The first part of the name, "Ch," means "people," and the latter part, "Yang," is the distinctive tribal name. Turning now to the Karen word "Pgha K'Nyaw." "Pgha" is a general word meaning people. "K'Nyaw" is, according to my informant, composed of two elements: "K'," a prefix often found in the names of tribes in the vicinity of Burma and denoting a tribal group, as "Kachin," "Kethe," or "Karok" (as used by the Talaing of the Chinese). "Nyaw" is derived from "Yang," referred to above. The final nasal "ng" is softened in Karen to the open syllable "aw," following the analogy of many words occurring in the dialects or in Burmese and having nasal endings; and "n" and "ny" are interchangeable. Thus, if this reasoning is correct, "Pgha K'Nyaw" is derived from the ancient "Yang," and is like the source from which the Burmese "Kayin" is derived.[7] This explanation affords another link connecting the Karen with the early dwellers within the confines of the present Chinese Republic.

197
The language of the Karen, after being classed in various ways, has now been recognized as a Sinitic language and, according to the last Burma *Census* (1911) is set down as belonging to the "Siamese-Chinese" sub-family of the Tibeto-Chinese languages, being grouped with the Tai or Shan. I feel sure that this last grouping is subject to revision by the philologists. While at first glance the relationship of these languages appears to be remote, Major H. R. Davies makes a very pertinent statement when he says: "Doubtless owing to phonetic change and the splitting of initial double consonants, many words have been altered beyond all hope of recognition, but a systematic study of the subject would, I believe, reveal many unsuspected resemblances."[8]

When we consider that many of these languages have never been fixed by written characters and that, within the past few decades, the Karen language has so changed that the bard literature of a century ago is almost unintelligible to the present generation, we can see how complicated the problem is and that it is only capable of solution, if at all, at the hands of experts.

193
The Karen language, as we now have it, is a monosyllabic agglutinated speech, with no final consonants in Sgaw Karen and with nasals and finals in other dialects. These are all marks of Sinitic

[7] Dr. Martin in the *Lore of Cathay* gives the names of the other three of the four ancient tribes of China as the Lo in the North, the Yi in the East, and the Man in the South.
[8] Maj. H. R. Davies, Yeoman, *The Link between Burma and the Yangtze.*

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1919) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

speech. Dr. D. C. Gilmore believes that the Pwo dialect branched off from the parent stem earlier than the Sgaw, but kept the original nasals and, being in closer contact with outside races, adopted more outside words.[9] The Sgaw has dropped the final nasals, because they were more difficult to pronounce, but has kept the original form of the language to a greater extent than the Pwo.

The fact that the Karen have used bronze drums for many generations has, I think, a bearing on their racial relationship. These remarkable drums have only recently been studied by Western scholars, and their full significance is still a matter for investigation. These drums were formerly thought to be of Chinese origin, but it seems that they are to be attributed to aboriginal tribes, found in what is now Tong King and Yunnan by the Chinese generals, Ma Yuon (41, A.D.) and Chu-Ko Liang (230, A.D.), who conquered these territories for the Chinese.[10]

The upper portion of Camboja is now considered to be the original home of these drums. They formed part of the possessions of the chiefs and were considered very precious, each being worth from eight to ten oxen. Chu-ko Liang is reported to have exacted sixty-three bronze drums as tribute from the barbarians and to have taken them back with him. Among the peoples of Burma the Karen seem to be the only race that has made use of these drums. They do not manufacture them, but buy them from the more industrious Shans, who do not appear to set much store by them.[11] Among the Karen, until recent times, the owner of one of these instruments was considered of more worth than a man who had seven elephants. A drum often formed the ransom of a village or the dowry of a maiden. Although so valued a possession often belongs to a chief, it may belong to any one who can purchase it.

It may have been from the Karen that the Chinese generals exacted part or all of their tribute. If so, this people was living in the mountains of Yunnan at the beginning of the Christian era.

---

[9] D. C. Gilmore, "Phonetic Changes in the Karen Languages" in *Journal, Burma Research Society*, Vol. VIII, Pt. II, pp. 122, ff.

[10] Several pamphlets and articles in anthropological journals deal with these drums. The most extensive work on the subject, which is in German, is by Franz Heger and is entitled *Alte Metalltrommeln aus Sudost-Asien*, Leipzig 1902. An excellent short work entitled "Anciens Tambours de Bronze," is by E. Parmentier and is printed in the *Bulletin l'Ecole d' Extreme-Orient*, Hanoi, 118. See also Chapter XIII on Bronze Drums, pp. 115-126.

[11] W. W. Cochrane, in *The Shans*, mentions the Shan towns of Tagaung or Ta Kaung and Maganeng or Mong-Kaung as denoting, respectively, Drum Ferry and Drum Town, and on page 66 he says: "They took also a palace drum, whose reverberations could call the people together, dismay enemies, or bring rain in time of drought." He makes no further reference to their use.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

000 is a bare possibility that the Karen tradition might have some relation to such an ancient belief.[16]

However, the story of the creation among these people has such a marked parallelism with the Hebrew story that, even though its origin has not been traced, we find it difficult to avoid the suspicion that it came from an Hebraic source, being carried by some wandering story-teller or unknown missionary only to become incorporated into the tribal belief of the Karen, along with their own primitive mythology.

174 The hilly province of Yunnan in southwestern China, with its great mixture of races, answers the description of an ancient reservoir of fugitives and migrating groups from both India and China. In the marauding expeditions and massacres taking place among the contending elements in such a "melting pot," the oriental conquerors showed mercy only to the women among the foe and made wives of them. On the assumption or theory that the Karen spent a part of their migratory period in Yunnan, they may have preserved a greater degree of racial purity by their practice of strict endogamy and their custom of retreating to mountain fastnesses.[17]

From Yunnan the route that was probably followed by the Karen was by way of the Mekong or Salween into the upper part of what is now the Shan States. Thence they spread southward over what is now Karenni and then on to Lower Burma and Tenasserim.[18]

We are unable to determine when these migrations took place, or when the Karen entered Burma. If it could be shown that the ancestors of the Karen were among those from whom the drum tribute was exacted by the Chinese generals, we should know that they were dwellers in Yunnan at the beginning of the Christian era.

173 Dr. Mason notes a tradition that a Karen chief went to the site of Laboung, intending to bring his people to settle there, but that when he returned with his followers the Shan had already occupied the location. The founding of Laboung has been fixed at 574 A.D. This comes the nearest to being a definite landmark in the south-

---

[16] John Ross, in *The Original Religion of China*, makes this the subject of an interesting volume. Also E. H. Parker, in *China and Religion*, gives a few hints that may show that the earliest ancestors of the Chinese held one god in much greater esteem than the other beings in their mythology.

[17] Sir J. G. Scott, Introduction to Indo-Chinese Mythology, *Mythology of all Races*, p. 288.

[18] C. C. Lowis on Burma, *Ethnological Survey of India*, (1910) p. 18.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

ward migration of the Karen people. The vicinity of Laboung was probably the stopping-place on their long journey.[19]

Mr. J. O'Riley, one of the earliest English officers to travel in the Karenni, writes that he found traditions indicating that the

KAREN HILL MEN COMING DOWN TO THE PLAINS

country around Pagan was one of the early homes of the Karen and that they were driven southwest from there, while the Chinese who were with them were driven back to their own country, and the Kollahs (foreigners), northward. The Karen then appear to have gone to the Shan country, Hyoung Yuay, and thence to have been driven to the Myobyay province. Here, according to tradition, they were again attacked and, having in time greatly increased in numbers, they turned against the Shan, expelled them, and occupied the present Red Karen country.[20]

The fact that the Karen are found farther south than the Shan also argues that they migrated earlier and were perhaps pushed on by the latter, who in turn may have given way before a more powerful force at their heels. O'Riley learned of a tradition of the Red Karen which suggested that they had lived ten generations in their present home.[21] This would limit their sojourn here to a

[19] Lt. Col. A. R. Hadfield, *The Karens of the Golden Chersonese*, p. 114.

19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

173 period of less than three hundred years. This is doubtless much too low an estimate, unless it refers to the time of their domicile in the particular district now occupied.

174 In so far as we may venture a conclusion, it is that the Karen migrated into Burma, coming from the ancient home of the early tribes inhabiting the country of China, with whom they are related by tribal, linguistic, and possibly religious ties, the full significance of which are yet to be determined.

174 174

NOTE. Various Theories of the Origin and Tribal Relationships of the Karen.—From the middle of the nineteenth century many theories regarding the origin and racial affinity of the Karen have been propounded by writers on Burma. J. R. Logan, writing in 1850 in the *Journal of the Indian Archipelago* (Vol. IV, p. 478) connects this people with the tribes in the highlands of the Kolan and Irrawaddy and in the lower bend of the Brahmaputra. Writing again in the same *Journal* in 1858 (New Series, Vol. II, p. 387) Logan maintains that the Karen language is a dialect of the Irrawaddo-Brahmaputran dialect, affected by Chinese influence as it came south. Professor De Lacouperie in his introduction to Colquhoun's *Amongst the Shans* (pp. xxxviii, ff.) argues that the Karen are descended from the ancient Tek or Tok tribes of central Asia. Early missionaries and other writers, including Denniker. (*Races of Man*, p. 395) believed that the Kachin and Chin formed a branch of the Karen race. *The Archaeological Survey* of Burma has linked the Karen both with the ancient Kanran, one of the three primitive tribes mentioned in Burmese annals, and with the Miao and Yao of Yunnan (*Report* of 1916). But the Kanran were driven southwestward from the region around Prome and seem to have disappeared from history. (Phayre, *History of Burma*, pp. 5-19.) The linguistic differences between the Miao, Yao, and Karen have led to the abandonment of the idea that they are closely related. In fact, all of these views have been given up, because they were based on an inadequate knowledge of the tribes concerned.

181 E44 Dr. Mason, in the *Journal, Asiatic Soc. of Bengal* (Vol. XXXVII, p. 162, 1868,) says that the first historical notice of the Karen is in Marco Polo's travels in the 13th Century. He quotes Malte Brun on the basis of Marco Polo's travels, as follows: "'This country of Caride is the southeastern point of Tibet, and perhaps the country of the nation of the Cariaines; which is spread over Ava.' This statement is confirmed by old Bghai poetry in which we find incidentally mentioned the town of Bhamo to which they formerly were in the habit of going to buy axes and bills or cleavers, as they do now at Toungoo. When this poetry was composed they lived five hundred miles north of their present locality." These geographical allusions seem so vague that it appears to be impossible to build much of a theory upon them. Perhaps the lines referring to Bhamo may refer to a trading expedition and not to a line of migration. And the statement of Malte Brun is only conjecture at the most.

In their excellent work on *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*, Hose and Mc-

[20] J. O'Riley, *Journal, Indian Archipelago*, Vol. IV, N.S. (1859), p. 8.
[21] *Ibid.*